

# RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## *Quarterly*

---

VOLUME XXIII No. 3

1993

---

### **HORACE HENRY BAXTER** **1818-1884**



RUTLAND IN RETROSPECT: GEORGE W. PERRY

*Grove Hall, home of Horace Henry Baxter*



*H. H. Baxter.*

*Horace Henry Baxter*  
1818-1884

# Horace Henry Baxter 1818-1884

by Louise McCoy

**R**UTLAND HOMES of the 1700s and early 1800s were clustered chiefly around Main Street, Washington Street and Center Street. Therefore, when a man of wealth bought a large lot at Grove Street and (now) Library Avenue, the local residents were heard to exclaim, "Why so far out?" This reaction of Rutlanders was reasonable for Grove Street, as a continuation of Merchants Row, had not even been laid out on the map until 1840.

Yet Mr. Baxter, the New York resident who had been born in Vermont, chose his home site in 1854 and, eventually, a farm also, for he loved the country and pure fresh air. It was, however, some fifteen years later before he purchased a farm of approximately 166 acres on the Creek Road which he named Maple Grove. Here he developed the most valuable and complete stock farm in Vermont, raising cattle, sheep and thoroughbred horses. Thanks to his early business success he could hire all the farm help he desired. Rumor has it that whenever a sturdy-bodied man asked him for work, Mr. Baxter's invariable reply was, "Go tell my farmer to put you to work, then at the end of the day come to me for pay." Wages were one dollar and ten cents for every day of labor.



**W**HO WAS THIS Mr. Horace Henry Baxter? He was born 18 January 1818 in Saxtons River, Vermont, to a judge of probate, a respectable citizen of Windham County, who later located to Boston. The son, named for his father, became at age fourteen assistant bookkeeper for a well-known Boston mercantile company, Blake and Appleton. Just two years later the young man was asked if he felt capable of being *chief* bookkeeper. He replied at once, "Yes, I am quite capable."

Perhaps the boy overworked or possibly felt homesick for Vermont. He left Boston, went into business in Bellows Falls and failed, because he had not the heart to say "no" to debtors. Then he was awarded a contract to pave the depot grounds at Bellows Falls. Next, he won a contract to lay four miles of track for the Western Vermont Railroad. His obvious efficiency brought a call for similar work out of state for the Cleveland & Toledo Railroad where he presided over the laying of tracks, in spite of great obstacles.

Reputation and considerable financial success allowed Mr. Baxter to return to Vermont to buy of William F. Barnes his West Rutland marble quarry which, in improved condition, was subsequently sold to Jerome & Riggs. Next came Mr. Baxter's control of the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad and prominence on Wall Street. He served as president of the New York Central until he ceded control to Cornelius Vanderbilt, who retained Mr. Baxter on the board of directors.

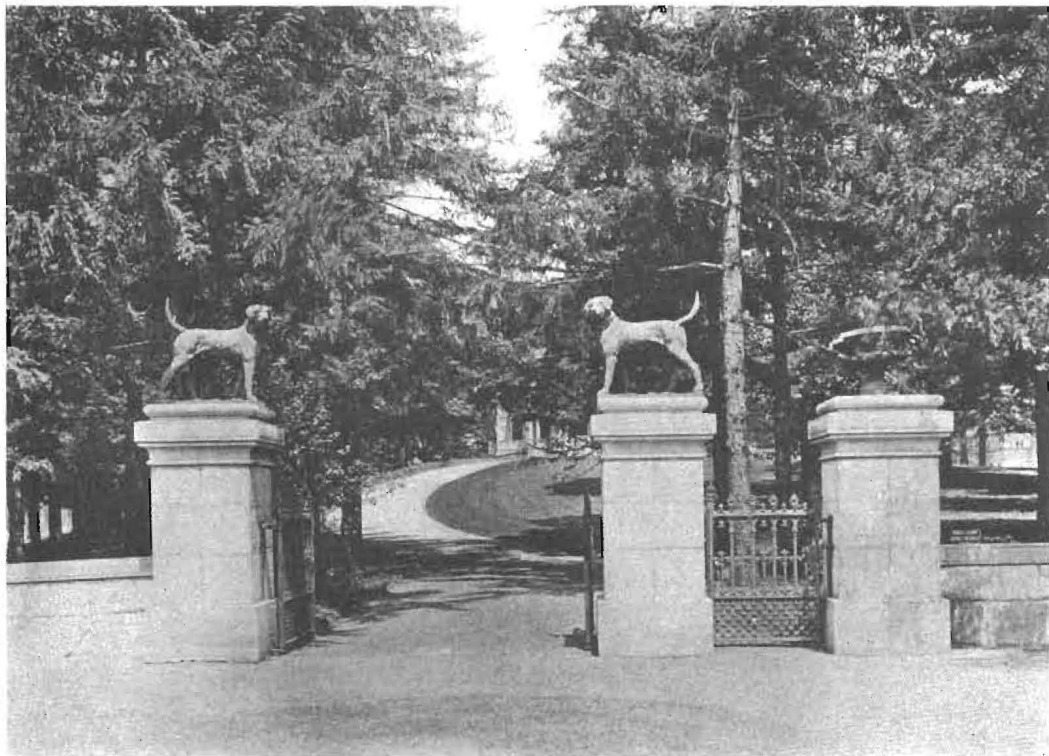
Small wonder that in 1854 Mr. Baxter, at the age of thirty-six, came to Rutland to buy a farm and a home site on which now stand the Rutland High School, Junior High School, the athletic field, the Crestwood apartments, plus two small houses of the estate. The summer home, called "Grove Hall" which Mr. Baxter built there, was one of the most sumptuous homes ever constructed in the State of Vermont. A green Victorian house now at 8 Seabury Street was the caretaker's cottage, says the present owner, Alice Cobb. Beyond the corner, north of the Junior High School, there were two marble pedestals, formerly graced by two huge dogs, guardians at the entrance of the estate. Memories abound still of "going to the dogs." Helen Ehlert and Isabell Howard, who grew up in the vicinity, remember those dog statues. Dorothy Dorsey, eventual owner-builder of 270 Grove Street, told of running as a child to watch in wonderment the Baxter tallyho emerge from the estate gates with a coachman in full livery, a memorable sight.

A longtime Rutland High School art teacher of the mid-1900s, Lucy Doane, remembers with sadness the razing of the beautiful home, which had been for a time the Crestwood Hotel. All that survives now of the elegant home are the fireplace mantels and decorative carvings that were bought and installed in Rutland and West Rutland homes.

During the winter season the Baxters resided at their home in New York City, 588 Fifth Avenue. From the time Mr. and Mrs. Baxter took up summer residence in their beautiful Grove Hall in 1858, their hospitality was the very fabric of social life in Rutland. They became great benefactors of the city. They contributed generously to the Trinity Episcopal Church. Nearly alone, Mr. Baxter procured a charter for the Rutland County Bank on Merchants Row. He disapproved of certain actions of his fellow bankers. He was, therefore, made a director, not president of this bank. Well-known for his executive abilities and for his promotion of the arts, Mr. Baxter was the speaker at the Rutland Centennial of 1861. He later incorporated into his own Baxter National Bank Building at 126 Merchants Row an auditorium, the Baxter Music Hall. An invitation to the "Grand Dedication Soiree" of 10 May 1876 included on the committee of arrangements such prominent Rutland names as W. Y. W. Ripley, M. Goldsmith, M. D., General L. C. Kingsley and Colonel W. C. Veazey.

During this time, Mr. Baxter's business interests stretched across the whole nation and extended even to England. He and Trenor N. Park of North Bennington

bought and sold the Emma Silver Mine in Utah before the mine ultimately failed. Nothing daunted Horace Henry Baxter. He is reputed to have told his stockbroker, "Sell that five thousand dollar interest: I'm not interested in holdings below \$100,000."



TUTTLE PRINTING CO.

*Entrance to the Baxter estate, Grove Street, guarded by the famous iron dogs*

# Grand Dedication Soiree

AT THE

**BAXTER MUSIC HALL,**

*Mr E. J. Porter*

The pleasure of your Company with ladies is solicited to attend the

**GRAND OPENING SOIREE,**

at Baxter Music Hall, in aid of the

**Rutland Free Library,**

**ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, MAY 10<sup>th</sup>, 1876.**

MUSIC BY

**AUSTIN'S TENTH REGIMENT BAND OF ALBANY.**

COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENTS.

JOHN N. BAXTER, Esq.  
Genl. L. G. KINGSLEY,

C. L. ALLEN, M. D.  
Genl. W. V. W. RIPLEY,

M. GOLDSMITH, M. D.  
LYMAN W. REDDINGTON, Esq.

W. G. VEAZEY, Esq.  
E. A. MORSE.

FREE CARRIAGE LIST AT THE BARDWELL HOUSE.

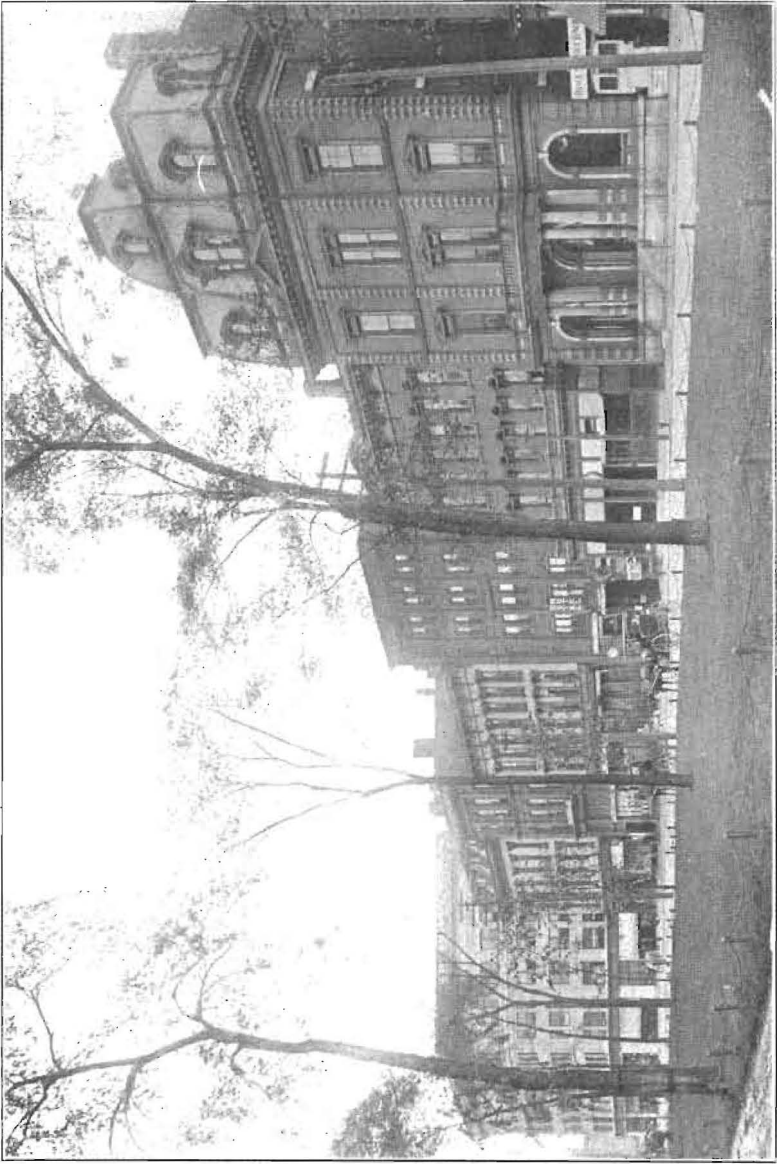
**TICKETS**

**\$3.00.**

*Rutland, May 3rd. 1876.*



*Baxter National Bank building featuring a music hall on an upper floor. Invitation (above) to attend a soiree to aid the Rutland Free Library (1876)*



*The Baxter Bank building at 126 Merchants Row (right)*



*Gardens and the stables at Grove Hall*

*Interior views of Grove Hall* ►



DON BORDEAU



DON BORDEAU



DON BORDEAU

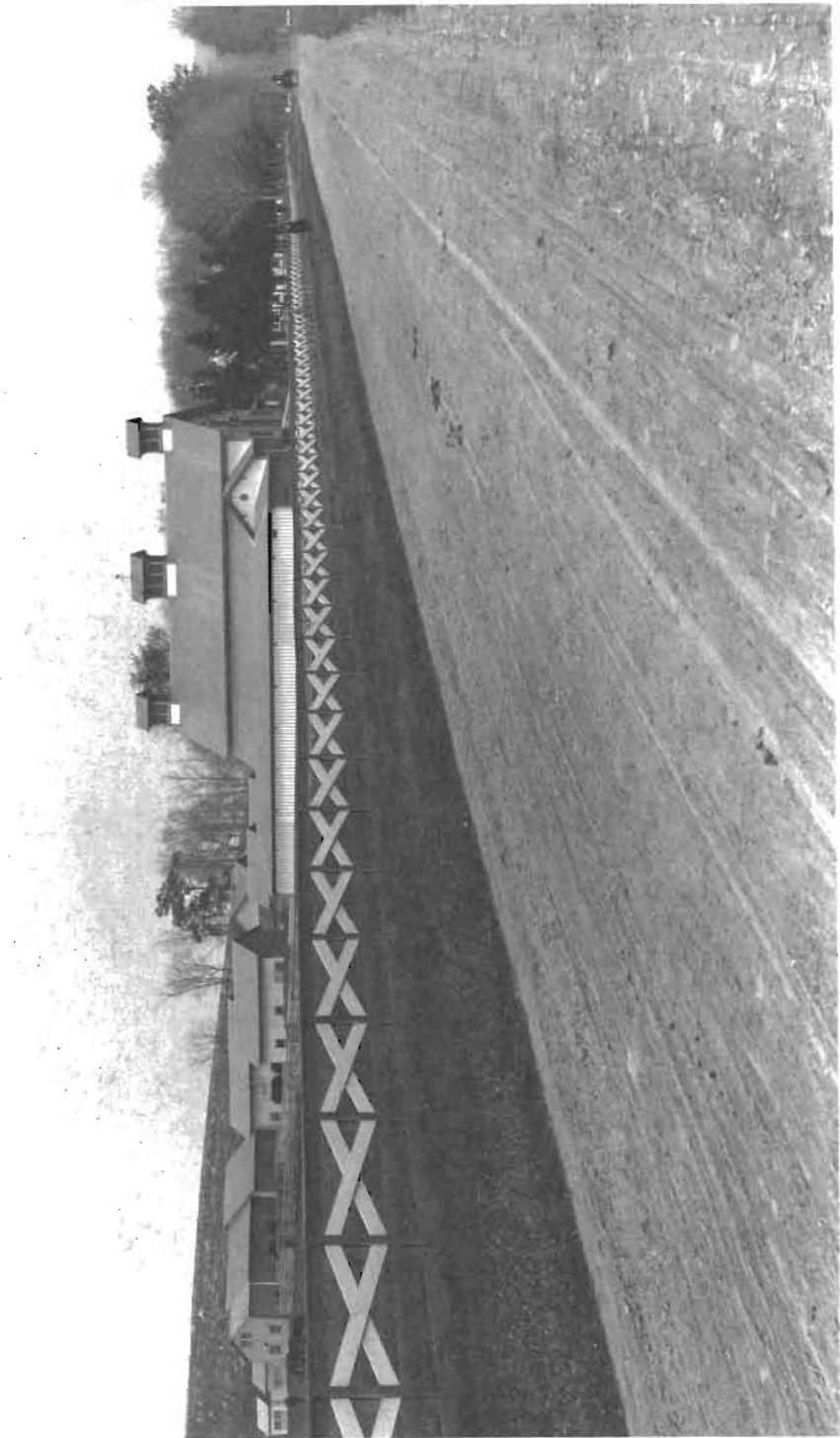


*Aerial view of the estate in its later years as the Crestwood Hotel*

DON BORDEAU



*Demolition of the Crestwood Hotel, 1945; former palatial home of H. H. Baxter*

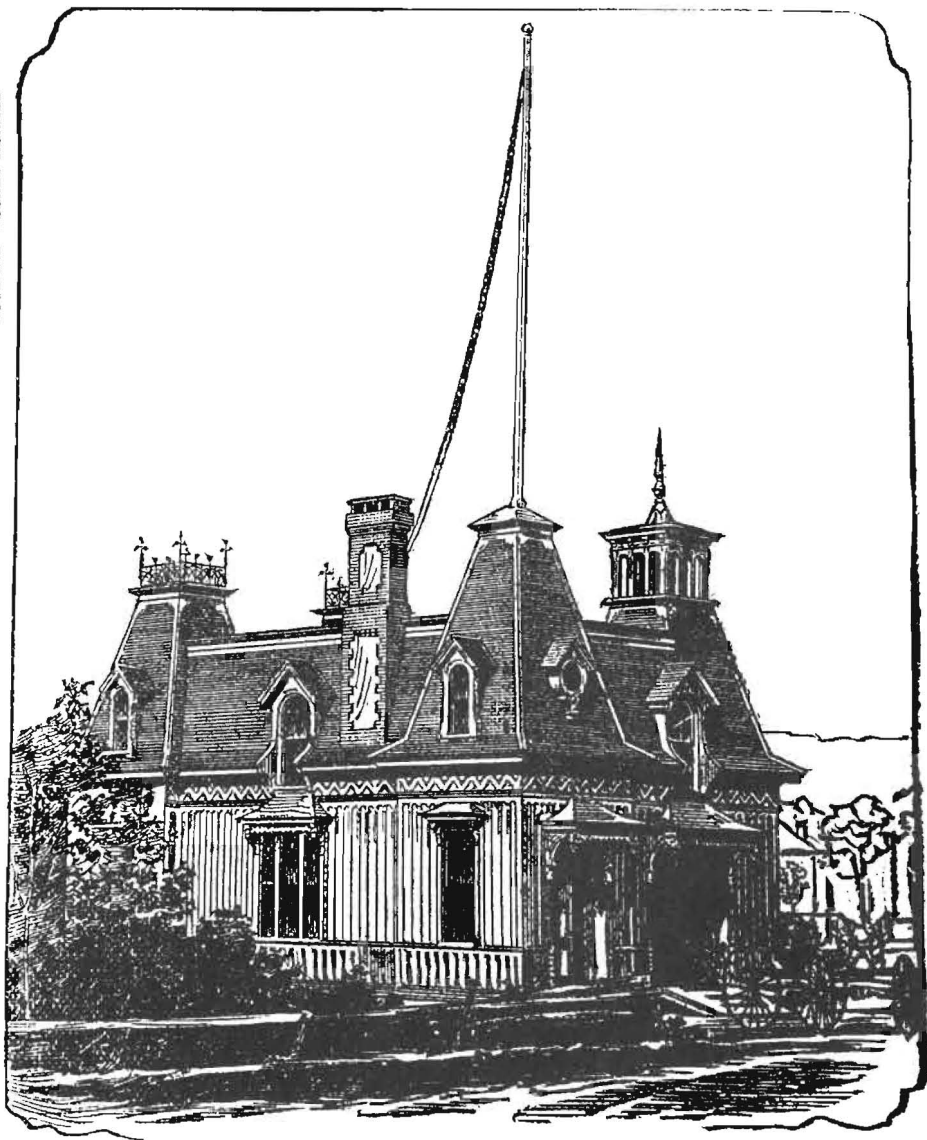


*View of Maple Grove Farm looking north up the Creek Road*



RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*A panoramic view of Maple Grove Farm on the Creek Road, the most valuable and complete stock farm in the state before the turn of the century; bounded on the south by the Leeds Billings farm and the property of Seneca Dorr to the north.*



*H. H. Baxter Hose Company, No. 5, constructed in 1882, now a residence located at 111 Library Avenue.*

As the War of Rebellion approached, Mr. Baxter proved that he had a finger on the pulse of the state of the Union. Baxter hated to see the advent of a divisive conflict between the states, but he promptly assumed a military leadership. He became adjutant general and inspector general of Vermont with a rank of brigadier general in 1859. The first State proclamation of the Civil War was over the signature of Horace Henry Baxter, then adjutant general by appointment of Governor Fairbanks. All companies of volunteers of Vermont were ordered to rendezvous in Rutland on 30 April 1861. General Baxter personally contributed funds for the soldiers' pantaloons, frockcoats and gray caps with blue cords. General Baxter led the state's soldiers down Broadway in New York City as they departed to the War Between the States. He was appointed in early 1861 to the Peace Convention which failed to avert the long and tragic struggle to preserve the Union. At one point during the Civil War, General Baxter even went to see Abraham Lincoln in Washington, D.C. He begged the president to "send the Vermont boys home for recuperation on pure Vermont air." He did!

Throughout his business life Mr. Baxter had the habit of holding large sums of ready cash. This enabled him to invest quickly in enterprises such as the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad, the Continental Bank of New York City and the Pullman Palace Car Company. By investing in the New York Elevated Railway he turned a one hundred thousand dollar investment into four times that sum.

In an 1881 issue of the *Rutland Herald* a column lists the residents of "our thriving city" who, in that year, had returned to the listers valuations of \$10,000 or more. These citizens were designated "rich." The list reads as follows:

	Real Estate	Personal Property
H. H. Baxter	\$70,470	\$115,550
Fred Chaffee	19,000	15,000
Charles Clement	15,000	156,799
J. W. Cramptom	82,300	68,198
H. H. Dyer	21,000	88,987
William Gilmore	9,600	100,959
Redfield Proctor	17,500	269,942
Warren H. Smith	9,700	27,047

Rutland Village did not have a fire department until 1894 after it had been incorporated as a city. Fires were a serious matter, so volunteer fire companies proliferated throughout the community. The H. H. Baxter Hose Company No. 5 was organized in 1875 and in 1882 General Baxter built a new hose house near the northwest corner of Library Avenue and Grove Street at a cost of \$4,000. The company had a four-wheeled hose cart with General Baxter's portrait on both sides. Eventually, the building was moved, when no longer used for its original purpose, and can be seen today at 111 Library Avenue.

**G**ENERAL BAXTER suffered for seven years from an undiagnosed, debilitating illness which led to his death on 19 January 1884. He was in his 67th year. A large funeral took place at his Fifth Avenue home in New York City. His body came by special train to Rutland and lay in state at the Baxter National Bank, since "Grove Hall" (the summer residence) was closed for the season. All Rutland stores were closed during the service at Trinity Episcopal Church. One notable tribute: "Had General Baxter died poor, there would have been an equally large attendance because of his kindness, sympathetic giving of employment in his projects and his deep feeling for the Common Man."

The bearers at the funeral were: Judge W. G. Veazey (a highly decorated Vermont Civil War officer), Charles E. Clark, Judge G. W. Dentin, J. W. Crampton, W. C. Landon and A. F. Walker. Burial was at the large hilltop lot in Evergreen Cemetery which Mr. Baxter had early helped to plan in its development. He was honored by the Kingsley Guards and his own H. H. Baxter Hose Company No. 5 of all-volunteer firefighters. The firemen marched in full uniform of blue double-breasted Prince Albert coats with double rows of brass buttons, fatigue caps and belts.



**T**HE FIRST MRS. BAXTER, Eliza Wales, had died after a childless marriage of eight years. The second Mrs. Baxter, Mary E. Roberts of Manchester, Vermont, was his wife for forty-three years.

Mr. and Mrs. Baxter had two sons. The older son, Harry, died at the age of four in 1861. He is buried on the west side of the Baxter lot in the Center Rutland cemetery. The younger son, Hugh Henry Baxter, age 21, survived the death of his father. To provide a foothold into the financial life of his father, the young man's uncle, John N. Baxter, resigned from the vice presidency of the Baxter Bank, to enable his nephew to fill that vacancy. Hugh Baxter, however, eventually moved permanently to New York City in the early 1900s.

Mary Baxter, as widow, began immediately to plan the Baxter Memorial Library in memory of her husband. There had been in the village a ferment for a library accessible to the public. A group of sixty-four local women had formed a Free Public Library Association, headed by Julia C. R. Dorr, president. Mrs. Baxter was on the board. This early public library of 3,234 books was first housed upstairs over a store on Merchants Row. The library was open only for restricted hours. The Baxter Memorial library, however, ultimately housed over 12,000 choice reference books. To house the books, Mrs. Baxter let a contract in 1889 for a beautiful marble and granite Romanesque building south of the estate gates. Its interior consisted of elegant semicircular alcoves gracefully carved, a reading room, a librarian's office for Mrs. Pomeroy, later Mrs. A. P. Riker. A winding staircase led to a tower, from which one had a splendid view of the fertile valley



*Baxter Memorial Library (1889-1927), now the Rutland Jewish Center*



and lower Library Avenue. In the lead article of the January 1896 issue of the *Vermont Magazine*, the Baxter Memorial Library books are described in considerable detail: "It is a library of reference . . . remarkably catholic in the wide range of subjects."

A noted scholar, Mr. Pomeroy, tutor to the Baxter son, devoted the last years of his life to assembling and overseeing this reference library collection. There was no limit to the cost of what Mr. Pomeroy could buy and even bind in red morocco, when appropriate. Some rare titles are listed in the *Vermont* article:

Myles Cloverdale Bible, London 1535

An English Bible of 1599

Pope Pius the Sixth Latin Bible printed in Basle 1551

Vulgate edition of Bible sanctioned by Pope Clement VIII, dated 1647

*Romance of Paris et Vienne*, Caxton 1485

*Gentle Shepard* by Allen Ramsey, London 1790

*Le Costume historique*, in color, Paris

Books of Scottish and English Songs, 16th to 19th century

History of Bayard, the good chevalier, sans peur et sans reproche

Many volumes of Greek, Latin, French, Italian and even Chinese classics

Volumes with steel engravings after Raphael, Michaelangelo, Titian, Murillo . . .

English volumes (Landseer . . . Turner) Paris salon

[It is sad indeed that the widow, Mary E. Baxter, who died around 1896, left no known stipulation regarding the library. Mr. Pomeroy's niece, Gertrude Pomeroy of Wellesley, Massachusetts, wrote a letter to the author in 1958 asking her to trace the books. Alas, so far, all research has been in vain. Where did the priceless volumes go?]

The building housing the library on Grove Street and Library Avenue was purchased by the Adath Israel Synagogue in 1927, to be converted to the Rutland Jewish Center. In 1956 the wall around the building was dismantled to furnish matching stone for the new wing of the Center.



FOURTEEN YEARS after the death of Horace Hugh Baxter, his son, Hugh Henry Baxter, sold the Maple Grove farm in 1898 to David Wells Temple. David Temple was in partnership with his brother John operating the Temple Brothers Monumental Company, located on West Street. David Temple, however, wanted to be a farmer, so, through the company, he purchased the Baxter farm. The transaction meant that "Grandma Perkins," as everyone called her, would remain for many years as the live-in housekeeper of the sixteen-room farmhouse. "Grandma Perkins" son was the farm superintendent, also originally hired by H. H. Baxter.



*Baxter farmhouse showing "Grandma Perkins," housekeeper and the mother of the farm superintendent.*

When the farm changed ownership in 1898, the Baxters left behind many of the household furnishings. Descendants of the Temple family still today possess several of these antique pieces.

There has been over the years considerable speculation that the farm, which became the Rutland Country Club and golf course, was owned by Horace Henry Baxter. However, the deed to the property clearly shows that H.H. Baxter's younger brother, John Nevers Baxter, owned the 382.2 acres. John Baxter was a lawyer and full-time Rutland resident, president of the Merchants National Bank, a board member of the People's Gaslight Company, vice president of the Baxter Bank, treasurer of the True Blue Marble Company, as well as the superintendent of the Rutland Marble Company. John Baxter's residence was the brick house at 33 Cottage Street. He died in 1898, fourteen years after the death of his older brother. The purchase of the farm by the country club in 1902 was done evidently through a settlement from the John Baxter estate.



**T**HE NAME OF THE BAXTER FAMILY lives on in Rutland in more than a street name and publications of the Rutland Historical Society. In the Vermont Room of the Rutland Free Library one can read the tattered-bound Baxter Memorial Book. "What is wealth?" asked Ralph Waldo Emerson. Mr. Baxter said, "It is an application of mind to circumstances or forethought in being at the right spot."

The Memorial Book describes General Baxter as an open, affable and charitable man, a stranger to deceit and subterfuge. He greeted the laborer, mechanic and tradesman with as much cordiality as he greeted the clergyman or banker. He gave liberally wherever assistance was needed. Although not a communicant, he gave generously to the building and support of Trinity Episcopal Church. His bounty was not hedged by race or creed. He was often quoted thus: "When an able-bodied man accepts alms he has taken a step toward downgrading his manhood and becoming a public charge. Anyone who gives such a man work and wages gives true benefaction." The accolade recalls the enduring and remarkable presence in the mid- and late 1800s of citizen H. H. Baxter, benefactor of Rutland.

## About the Author

LOUISE MCCOY is a member of the Rutland Historical Society Publications Committee and a former member of the board. While she refers to herself as a "family person," she is a talented musician who has been a noteworthy promoter of the arts in the Rutland area. As a graduate of Middlebury College, she continued her musical education at the Sorbonne in Paris, France.

## Acknowledgments

Donald Bordeau for rare, detailed photographs of Grove Hall, including an air view of the Baxter home after it became the Crestwood Hotel. Also Anne-Marie Cobb, Rabbi and Mrs. Solomon Goldberg, Jake Sherman (Rutland Free Library), George Gaines Smith, Margaret Waddington, Carroll Temple Jones and Elaine Purdy.

## Bibliography

- Charles Edward Crane, *Let Me Show You Vermont* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957).
- David G. Gale, *Proctor, The Story of a Marble Town* (Brattleboro, VT: The Vermont Printing Co., 1922).
- Agnes B. Ormsbee, "Baxter Memorial Library", *Vermont Magazine*, vol. 1, 126-27.
- F. W. Beers, 1869 reprint for Rutland County (Rutland, VT: Tuttle Printing Co., 1969).
- Deed with Baxter name (Rutland, VT: Rutland City vault)
- T. D. Seymour Bassett, *Outsiders Inside Vermont* (Brattleboro, VT: Stephen Greene Press, 1967).
- Rutland Historical Society, *Rutland in Retrospect* (Rutland, VT: Academy Books, 1978).
- Illustrated Booklets: *Industries, Resources, Beauties of Vermont's Leading City* (Rutland, VT: Tuttle Printing Co., 1937).
- Dorman Kent, *Distinguished Vermonters* (Montpelier, VT: Vermont Historical Society, 1937).
- Smith and Rann, *History of Rutland County, VT* (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason Co., 1886).



*Popular background for local photos: the iron dogs on the marble pedestals*

**RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**96 CENTER STREET, RUTLAND, VERMONT 05701**  
**(802) 775-2006**

Membership in the Society is open to all upon payment of appropriate dues. (See dues schedule below.) With membership, for its period, goes a subscription to the Quarterly, any newsletters, a copy of the Annual Report, entitlement to vote at business meetings, and benefits accruing from support of the Society's Museum, exhibits, programs, collections and library. The year through which membership is paid and the category are noted on all address labels.

Please send any address change on Postal Service Form 3576 (a postcard freely available at your local post office).

Annual Meeting is held at 7:30 p.m. on the third Thursday of October.

Annual dues categories are: Sustaining—\$125.00	Contributing—\$20.00
Sponsoring—\$50.00	Regular—\$10.00
Business—\$125.00	Senior Citizens
Students	(62 & up)—\$8.00
(18 & under)—\$8.00	

Special one-payment categories are: Lifetime—\$200.00      Memorial Gift—\$200.00

Advance payment for 2 or 3 years is welcome, helping to reduce costs.

Please make checks payable to: Rutland Historical Society

Note change of address: 96 Center Street  
Rutland, VT 05701

Manuscripts are invited: address correspondence to the Managing Editor.

Managing Editor: Jean C. Ross

Copyright © 1993 The Rutland Historical Society, Inc.  
ISSN 0748-2493

**RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
96 Center Street  
Rutland, Vermont 05702

**ADDRESS CORRECTION  
REQUESTED**

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION U.S. POSTAGE <b>PAID</b> Rutland, Vermont Permit No. 12
---



The number or letter on the address label indicates your dues status:  
93 current      Life membership